



# Natural and Cultural Resources

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## BACKGROUND<sup>1</sup>

Lexington is a place of national significance because of the historic events that began here, and is equally a place of regional significance because of some natural resource elements that begin here. The Town gains extraordinary benefit from being where things begin, but that position also carries extraordinary stewardship responsibilities. They deserve careful attention in the Town's comprehensive planning.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### *Water Resources*

Lexington has no rivers, only relatively small brooks and streams, because the Town is sited straddling the divides among three watersheds. No extensive streams go through Lexington; they all start here, traveling to the Merrimack River via the Shawsheen basin if originating in the north, to Boston Harbor via the Mystic basin if originating in the east, and to Boston Harbor via the Charles basin if originating in the south. Being at the beginning of river basins carries both benefits and responsibilities.

- ❖ There has been no need in Lexington for building and maintaining major bridges to cross waters. Lexington has no bridges, rude or not, for arching major floods (the Concord River starts gathering water more than 20 miles away from Concord in Hopkinton, another three-basin headwater town).
- ❖ Even Lexington's largest streams are of the scale that one clogged culvert or a family of beavers can create flooding, but also are of a size that large-scale structural damage from flooding is a smaller concern than is common further from headwaters. Lexington has its

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<sup>1</sup> This material draws heavily upon the rich information resources of the *1997 Lexington Open Space and Recreation Plan*.

share of sometimes-flooded basements, but has no, even occasionally, raging torrents of floodwater.

- ❖ For the same reason—relatively low flows—waterbodies in Lexington are more sensitive to man’s actions than is the case downstream where local impacts are diluted in larger volumes of flowing water. Streamflows in Lexington are highly sensitive to changes intervening in the water cycle, such as new impervious surface, causing streams to dry or flood or both. Similarly, even relatively small amounts of contamination introduced into a small stream can easily result in water qualities destructive to that stream’s ability to function as a healthy natural system.
- ❖ By virtue of being at the headwaters, water impacts that occur in Lexington continue to be of consequence for many miles as the waters flow downstream. Among the downstream resources affected by action or inaction in Lexington are the Arlington Reservoir and Hobbs Brook Basin, one important as a recreation resource, the other as public water supply for Cambridge. Via groundwater as well as surface flows, water flowing from Lexington contributes to water supplies in Burlington, Bedford, and Woburn.

Lexington residents’ use of potable water and disposal of used water are largely isolated from those natural systems. Virtually 100% of the dwellings in Lexington are served by MWRA water collected no nearer than Clinton, and all but about 6% of Lexington dwellings are served by public sewerage disposed into the MWRA system<sup>2</sup>. Our own water and sewer service is “invisible” and largely taken for granted. No raging floods occur nearby, and even water as a recreational or scenic asset is a relatively small part of the Lexington environment. That probably leads to less awareness of the significance of local actions for water in Lexington than would otherwise be true, but, in fact, human actions in Lexington are of large importance to water resources in the region, as well as being of significance locally, where flooding does occur to some degree, and water quality is not always well maintained in streams and ponds.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on US Census of Housing 1990 data.



### ***Land and Vegetative Resources***

Statistically, less than 1,000 acres of Lexington's land (out of about 11,000 acres in the Town) remains undeveloped but developable, suggesting that the Town is essentially wholly built out. Flying over the Town gives a very different impression. Lexington appears lushly green, with discernable pockets of development, but the dominant impression is that of tree cover and ground vegetation. Both of those views are correct. Virtually all of the Town's land resources are to some degree now urbanized, but that urbanization exists within a vital and vitally important natural context.

While nearly 1,000 acres remain developable, another 1,000 acres are unbuilt-on because they are unbuildable, chiefly because of wetlands. Lexington's relatively flat topography and location straddling watershed divides has resulted in extensive wetland areas that act as hugely productive resources for the ecosystem, and even serve development by acting as sponges to mitigate both flooding and dry spells. Some 1,300 acres, some of them included in the "unbuildable" count above, have been protected through public or civic ownership and held as open space. That acreage is not just a heritage from the distant past: most of it has been protected just in the past four decades. Protected acreage nearly doubled in the past twenty-five years. Since 1985, in Lexington, about 40% as much land has been added to the rolls of protected land as has been developed.

In his 1961 book, *Megalopolis*, geographer Jean Gottman noted "The rockiest pasture ten miles from Boston is more valuable than the blackest loam in central Illinois."<sup>3</sup> He predicted the persistence of agriculture in megalopolitan (his term) areas, but only those types that could benefit most from that locational value, especially nurseries serving homeowners, and greenhouse and other space-intensive growing of crops for local sale. Those uses of land indeed persist in Lexington. The acreage they involve is small, as is the dollar volume of their production in the regional economy. However, they make vital contributions to the local quality of life, community character, and by providing an otherwise missing element in the mix of terrestrial environments, they can contribute to the local ecosystem as long as their practices reflect appropriate concern about chemical intrusions.

### ***Fisheries and Wildlife***

Fish are stocked in the Old Reservoir and inhabit a variety of other locations where they play a role in the ecological system, but are not noted as a recreational or food resource. A great variety of mammals inhabit the Town to the increasing concern of many, since they prominently include often-troublesome coyotes, skunks, raccoons, possum and occasional whitetail deer. They too play roles in the balance of natural systems of which we are a large, and perhaps to those mammals, troublesome, element. Lexington is host to a rich array of birds. Dunback Meadow is a birding site of statewide significance. A number of rare species are, from time to time, found in Lexington, deserving special care, including long-eared owls and spotted and wood turtles.

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<sup>3</sup> Jean Gottman, *Megalopolis*, The Twentieth Century Fund, NY, 1961.

The significance of wildlife to the Lexington environment underscores the importance of protecting corridors for their movement among habitat areas. A number of critical corridors have been identified in the *1997 Open Space Plan* and targeted for special protection efforts.

### ***Resources for Natural Resource Management***

Responsibility for management of the Town's natural resources relies heavily upon the Conservation Commission's authority, chiefly that of administering the State-adopted Wetlands Protection Act and the companion Town Wetlands Bylaw, and enforcing compliance with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's stormwater management requirements. The Town also relies upon the Commission's own initiatives, which go well beyond that to include leadership in seeking acquisition of land and in public education. The Commission works together with Citizens for Lexington Conservation and the Lexington Stewardship Committee in its efforts. The Lexington Nature Trust and a variety of more localized trusts provide vehicles for financing public interest efforts through private contributions.

Additional authority for natural resource management comes from a variety of local by-laws. Those include the recently enacted Tree Bylaw and the many resource-protective elements of the Town's Zoning By-law, including brook and pond setbacks (now overshadowed at many locations by the Massachusetts River Protection Act), the Wetland Protection District, and the Flood Hazard Insurance District.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Lexington's stewardship responsibility to its Revolutionary War heritage has clearly shaped the course of development in the Town for two and a quarter centuries, and will clearly continue to do so in the future. That stewardship responsibility has been executed with effective care. History didn't stop being made in Lexington in 1775. The Town has other cultural resources deserving of careful attention, and they, too, have drawn responsive efforts.

Listing of properties on the State or National Register gives recognition to their antiquity, architecture, or associations as well as being a preservation aid. Designation as a National Historic Landmark is an even more selective honor, being made directly by the Secretary of the Interior. Most communities have no such Landmarks, but Lexington has four of them: Lexington Green, Buckman Tavern, the Hancock-Clark House, and the Minuteman National Historic Park, in a designation shared with Lincoln and Concord. Eight additional properties are individually listed on the National Register, as are properties within five National Register Districts. Approximately 600 properties are protected through inclusion within one or another of the Town-established local historic districts.

The most recent National Register listing in Lexington was Metropolitan State Hospital in 1994, and that complex may contain the most recently constructed structures to be listed in Lexington (unless the Post Office holds that position). Change may be coming. Five Fields, designed and developed by the Gropius-led Architects Collaborative, just celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, making it of an age when it is normally eligible for consideration for listing on the National

Register of Historic Places. Moon Hill, produced by the same acclaimed firm, is just a few years older.

The cultural resources of Lexington deserving protection also include those of local importance but that are not of major importance beyond the Town. For many, the character of their own neighborhood is a cultural resource of great value to them, both deserving and needing protection against erosion through destructive change. As noted in other elements of this *Plan*, steadily growing demand for location in Lexington and dwindling “new land” for development places many existing structures at risk of displacement, to say nothing of having inharmonious development occur nearby. Among the neighborhoods that have been noted in this context are Meriam Hill, Parker/Upper Clarke Street, Follen Hill, Peacock Farm, Moon Hill, and Five Fields.

At even a more localized scale, there is large concern in Lexington that the character of many individual streets or blocks is being damaged by the construction of new homes replacing older ones. The new homes are commonly viewed as being both out of scale and out of context with the established character of that location. That concern is common not only in Lexington but in many communities facing development pressures like Lexington’s. The prevalence of that intrusive change is a legitimate public concern.

### ***Resources For Management***

The Town employs a powerful array of tools for managing its cultural resources. The Lexington Historical Commission has prepared a nine-volume inventory of historical structures across the Town, documenting more than a thousand structures. All of those buildings plus certain others are protected against demolition until the Commission has reviewed that proposal and approved it or ordered that it be delayed for a six month period to allow alternatives to be sought, including rehabilitation.

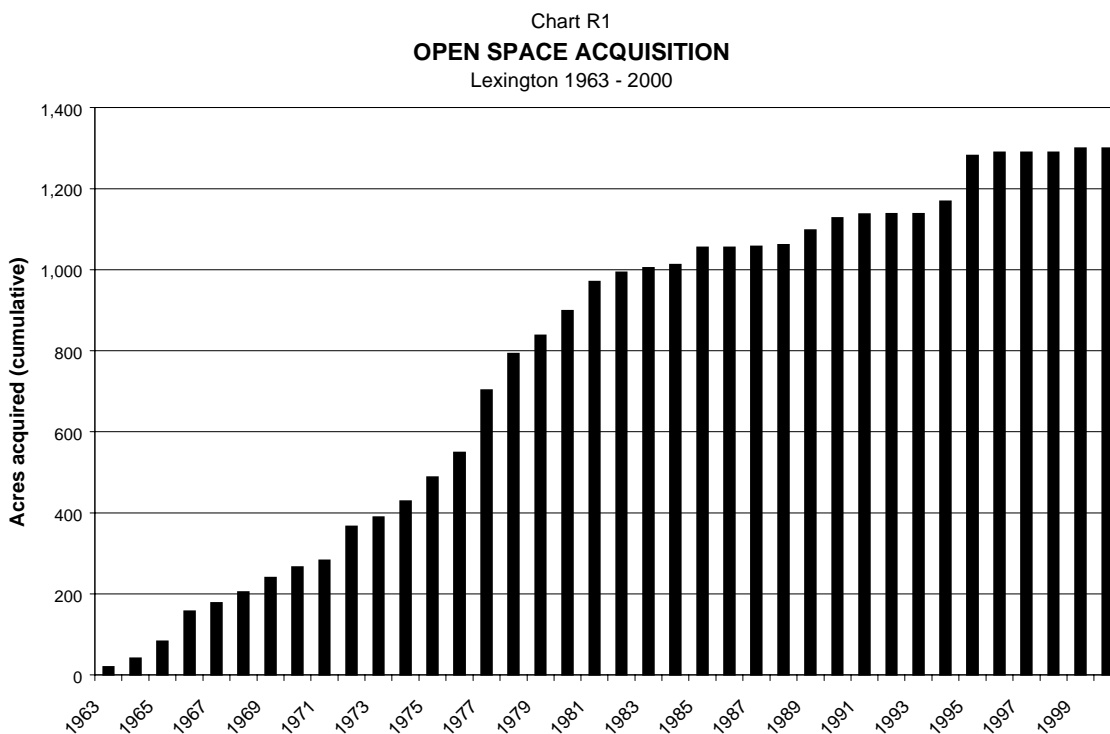
Four contiguous local historic districts have been created by Town Meeting, extending along Massachusetts Avenue from East Lexington to Worthen Road, and out Hancock Street to the Hancock-Clarke premises, including a substantial area in Lexington Center. Within those districts development (or demolition) may proceed only following determination of appropriateness by the Lexington Historic District Commission.

Two advisory groups add to the process. The Design Advisory Committee brings professional design expertise to assist Town agencies and those doing development in bringing new buildings, signage, lighting, and other change into a good relationship with Lexington’s special context. Its success, through assistance, rather than regulation, has made it a model for other communities. Similarly, the Lexington Center Committee, among other roles, provides input into design when it involves the Center.

Two private non-profit organizations are of special note. The Lexington Historical Society plays a number of key roles, not least through ownership of the Hancock-Clarke House and Munroe Tavern and management of Buckman Tavern under lease from the Town. The National Heritage

Museum provides resources and programs that nicely complement the cultural management efforts of the Town.

The National Park Service is a key actor as an owner and resource steward for the Battle Road Minuteman National Historic Park, and the educational efforts associated with it.



## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In a refreshing departure from the usual verbiage, the *Open Space Plan* cites protection of the physical beauty of the landscape and community as one of its basic goals. That equally deserves inclusion as a goal in this *Comprehensive Plan* as well. “Beauty” is a word that often sparks derision and debate in planning and design circles, but beauty clearly motivates a significant part of our concerns for both natural and cultural resources. Some will argue that it is not necessary to pursue “beauty” as an end in itself since if we manage well from other perspectives, the outcomes will as a result be perceived as “beautiful.” So be it. We shall nevertheless acknowledge this as a goal, alongside managing well from other perspectives.

The *Open Space Plan* states as a goal the protection of the *region’s* (our emphasis) vital natural habitats and biodiversity. To that we would simply add “cultural resources.” The Background discussion above makes clear how interrelated Lexington’s resources are with those of its region. The Battle Road does not stop in East Lexington or at Fiske Hill, any more than Vine Brook dies

at the Middlesex Turnpike. Our actions need to take neighbors into account and, where appropriate, be executed in unison with them.

The goal of local as well as global sustainability is applicable to all elements of the Comprehensive Plan, but its salience is especially clear for this element. “Sustainability” means meeting present as well as future human needs, while using resources efficiently, fairly, and within Nature’s means. The four key principles for achieving that are to meet human needs fairly and efficiently, giving priority to basic needs, to reduce dependence upon fossil fuels, underground metals, and minerals; to reduce dependence upon chemicals and synthetics; and to reduce encroachment upon Nature.







## STRATEGIC APPROACH

Having initially listed the “natural” and “cultural” strategies separately, it became strikingly clear how commonly the same strategic approaches apply to both. Accordingly, that is how strategies are now being conceived.

- ❖ Protect and heighten elements characteristic of Lexington, avoiding or using great care regarding intrusion of “exotics,” whether natural or cultural. Make Lexington more especially “Lexington” than ever, guarding against any further homogenization into faceless suburbia. The arguments supporting that for both natural and cultural environments are profound, not a simple “we like it.” So too are the arguments for not being absolutist about it. Moon Hill in its time was viewed as “exotic,” and fortunately out of the way so not to be intrusive. It has enriched the community’s cultural environment. The Lexington landscape is now enriched through trees and other landscape materials now common here but introduced from distant lands a century or more ago.
- ❖ Preservation and reuse of existing resources. That applies equally to a rainwater cistern for the garden and the sensitive restoration of a century-old house. Through mindfulness towards this strategic approach both encroachment and degradation can be reduced, while strengthening what is singular about Lexington.
- ❖ Use the power of Lexington’s locational attractiveness as a tool for achieving objectives. Communities as different as Cambridge, MA and Londonderry, NH are currently succeeding in demonstrating how selectivity in responding to growth pressures can provide support for both cultural and natural resources. That power enables Lexington to be narrowly selective in the development that it facilitates, and to offer demanding incentives with expectation that they will draw responses.
- ❖ Heighten community receptivity to proposals through carefully programmed community education. The level at which discourse in Lexington takes place has allowed this community to entertain approaches that are demanding in their rationale and basis. Careful education can allow debate to be well informed.

## IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

### 1. Reduce Encroachment on Natural Resources

Encroachment on natural resources remains a vital concern, even in an essentially “developed” community such as Lexington.

- 1.1 Pursue open space protection efforts. Bringing permanent protection to open space is a powerful means of both avoiding encroachment on land, water, habitat and other critical resources, but also serves to protect community character resources. The goals that have been discussed for open space protection are dauntingly high, including the

goal of protecting at least one-third of the remaining uncommitted land in the Town: it will take major efforts to accomplish them. These are among the potential means.

- (a) Mandate the preservation of open space in all but the smallest-scale new development, including “conventional” subdivisions. That is nearly, but not quite, done under the Town’s present residential zoning controls. Following now well-established Massachusetts examples, that current residential requirement could be extended in its applicability (through a carefully structured zoning provision), and extended to apply also to non-residential development, for which the rationale for open space preservation is no less compelling. A system of fees in lieu of such provision, if carefully constructed, could provide flexibility for both applicants and the Town.
- (b) Explore enabling development rights to be transferred from one parcel to another when both Town and applicant find that it serves their interests, resulting in preserved open space on one parcel and more density than otherwise allowed on another. Called “Transfer of Development Rights” or “TDR,” such transfers have long been touted as a means of protecting key resources, but have seen limited usage in New England towns. Even that limited usage demonstrates how potentially effective TDR could be, though in Lexington, usage of that device would likely be limited. In effect, TDR is “clustering” between parcels rather than within a single one.
- (c) Offer open space preservation as a traffic mitigation option. Explore zoning that measures and controls “density” in trips per acre as well as in floor area per acre, then obliges high trip-density uses to offset their high trip generation with open space contributions.
- (d) Gain at least policy commitment to adequate local funding for open space acquisition. Open space acquisition and its funding have been strongly supported for many years in Lexington, essentially through a series of case-specific proposals. At this point, however, assurance of having the capacity to achieve the goals now set out would greatly facilitate planning and budgeting. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is intended to provide such a committed source. For various reasons that specific mechanism may not be appropriate for Lexington, but that does not mean that some form of reliably predictable funding over time would not be an invaluable aid. Predictability of funding could be gained through inclusion of such funding in the Town’s Capital Improvements Program, or perhaps through a dedicated source, such as CPA provides, or perhaps simply through broad agreement with a statement of policy in a later version of this Plan.
- (e) Establish an aggressive program to encourage and facilitate donations of land or rights in land, helping owners satisfy both their family fiduciary responsibilities and contributing to the public interest, which, with skillful guidance, can often be a benefit to all involved parties.

1.2 Revise zoning and other development controls to protect natural resources against encroachment or degradation. There are many helpful measures that can be taken to reduce encroachment on resources from development that takes place.

- (a) Strengthen controls over landscaping in both Zoning and Subdivision Regulations by including provisions regarding chemical use avoidance, controls regarding importation of invasive exotic species, and requiring water use moderation as a complement to other existing controls under Board of Health or other jurisdictions.
- (b) Further strengthen landscaping controls by restricting the severity of topographic change that is allowable without a special exception, with change measured either vertically (changing grade more than X feet) or in cubage (displacing more than Y cubic yards of earth materials).
- (c) Strengthen zoning controls regarding the allowable extent and location of impervious coverage, improving residential development coverage limits now applied only to cluster and special residential development, then extending them to business and “conventional” residential development, and more strictly controlling the location of such surfaces, such as limiting paving in front yards. No amount of stormwater management ingenuity can really replicate the original context when impervious surfaces comprise a large share of the ground surface.
- (d) In that same spirit, revise subdivision regulations to allow narrower streets in subdivisions. The Planning Board commonly does so on waivers. Revision would make clear that the Town really prefers a smaller scale for its residential streets.
- (e) As suggested in the Land Use element, consider revising zoning to offer “green building” some form of bonus in new development upon its demonstration that it meets specific standards for performance regarding site design, energy, water, and interior environment. That might use the LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) rating system or the standards of a tax incentive bill currently under consideration in the Massachusetts legislature.

## 2. Moderate Auto Usage.

Less auto travel would result in reducing fossil fuel dependence as well as protecting town character. This type of effort is discussed at length in the Economic Development Element, so its parts are only briefly cited here.

2.1 Promote mixed use. Mixed uses can materially reduce the number and length of trips. Mixed use can mean an array of things in Lexington ranging from more appropriately allowing occupations within homes, through revising rules to allow residential uses in more business districts (including the Center’s BA district), to refining rules to enable more business districts to effectively serve nearby residents.

- 2.2 Strengthen transportation demand management. As cited above, uses can be obliged to reduce their trip generation below usual norms (or doing so can be encouraged through incentives), and better site design to encourage access by other than individual autos could be facilitated, encouraged, and in some aspects required. Requiring pedestrian and bike access efforts in new development is one potential part of that.
- 2.3 Explore further ways of reducing auto trip making, such as creation of a regional Transportation Management Organization through which public and private efforts can be joined to gain scale and effectiveness.

### 3. Address Pollution and Other Natural Resource Concerns.

Natural resource concerns go beyond open space protection and addressing the automobile. These are some further measures towards implementing our goals, most of which are also cited in other Plan elements or are already underway in the Town.

- 3.1 Have Town facilities and operations serve as a demonstration of good resource efficiency and waste reduction practices. The Town already reflects sustainability principles in its facilities and operations. It could go a step further. In adopting and integrating such objectives in its own practices, the Town could serve as a demonstration in areas such as maintaining, powering, rehabilitating, or developing its buildings, facilities, land, and recreation areas, and also in carrying out ongoing municipal operations and services. Town actions in these areas could serve to illustrate what the community's businesses, private residential and commercial development, and general citizenry might also undertake to reorient their respective activities in directions that are resource protective.

For example, the Town might make explicit goals for and take steps to reduce, creatively re-use, or recycle its own solid waste, thereby demonstrating how solid waste disposal problems and costs can be addressed, serving the principle of meeting human needs efficiently. The Town could maximize use of alternatives to chemical products in building and ground maintenance, thereby showing how to reducing chemical and hazardous waste contamination, disposal, and cost problems, and modeling what cost and employee benefits result from that reduction in dependence upon chemicals. The sustainability objective to reduce encroachment upon nature could provide a basis for efforts at reducing and reusing graywater and stormwater, retaining and protecting shade trees, and further protecting remaining wildlife areas.

- 3.2 As cited in the Economic Development element, the Town might explore the creation of a Business Improvement District in Lexington Center, undertaking among other things solid waste management efforts, possibly involving a regional effort to deal with commercial use solid waste recycling.
- 3.3 Continue supportive programs already in place, including the annual tree planting program, an aggressive solid waste management program, and the implementation of parts of the Town's *Open Space Plan* not specifically cited here.

- 3.4 Conduct a program for periodic monitoring of environmental quality parameters as proposed in *Vision 2020* to provide a basis for ongoing corrective action.
- 3.5 Explore creation of a new organization, provision of new resources to an existing organization, or take other structural measures to provide leadership for the actions listed above and others relating to making more efficient use of resources and reducing waste.

#### 4. Celebrate the Town's Place in National History.

All communities have stewardship responsibilities to the legacies of their pasts. For Lexington, that stewardship includes elements of far more than local significance, towards which there are special responsibilities, entailing both protection of surviving resources from the Revolutionary era and also providing a setting for them that is appropriate to that legacy.

- 4.1 As suggested by *Vision 2020*, continue efforts to document and archive information from that era, provide educational resources about it, and promote awareness of that time and its events even among Lexington residents, many of whom know little about them.
- 4.2 Seek resources to explore creation of a "Battle Road Corridor Overlay" district. A small part of the Battle Road in Lexington is within the Minuteman National Historic Park. A large portion, but by no means all of the Battle Road in Lexington is included within one of Lexington's four Historic Districts. The remaining portions are not identifiable in relation to that history in any way except by reading maps, nor are they protected against inappropriate development actions in any way. Surely that which perhaps is American history's most celebrated route should be legible on the ground in its entirety, at least through Lexington, and perhaps through the other towns through which it passes, as well.

Exactly what would constitute appropriate measures for providing that legibility and recognition requires careful consideration. Distinctive street signs would be a small step beyond the present lack of attention. Perhaps there could be distinctive landscaping, at least within the public way, and possibly beyond it. Milestones? More commemorative markers? Banners on Patriot's Day? Demanding regulation of abutting architectural change might go too far. Finding the right mix and extent of actions (all the way to Charlestown?) deserves effort.

- 4.3 Develop a program to articulate the entrances and, perhaps, symbolic small spaces within Lexington. Lexington has a wonderfully clear Center, but it no longer is clear where historic (or contemporary) Lexington begins or ends. Such a remarkable community should be recognizable immediately upon entry, ideally not by yet another painted sign, but perhaps in some other more direct way. In fact, it would be even better if one could recognize being in Lexington throughout the Town, at least on major arteries. That might be achieved if there were an exemplary program of street design

and green space adoption and management by civic groups, resulting in a distinctive pattern of special plantings at the Town's most visible spots, which are those within intersections.

## 5. Address Other Cultural Resource Concerns.

Lexington's cultural resource concerns cover the entire Town and are not bound by historical era. Accordingly, there are a number of further cultural resource management efforts that are important to pursue.

5.1 Prepare, adopt, and pursue a Town-wide Preservation Plan. Inventories of existing resources have occupied preservation planning energies for some years, but that does not constitute a plan. Just as the Town's open space and recreation actions are supported through a detailed Open Space and Recreation Plan, cultural preservation efforts would benefit from a well-developed plan.

### 5.2 Develop controls protecting special locations within the Town.

- (a) There are many areas of the Town that contain architectural resources that deserve protection, but perhaps should not be at the same level of regulatory control that is normally exerted within an historic district. Such relatively light-handed districts might prove appropriate to areas already cited, such as Meriam Hill, Parker/Upper Clarke Street, Follen Hill, Peacock Farm, Moon Hill, Five Fields, and the Manor. The potential for such districts should be explored.
- (b) There are areas in which design specifics are not of concern, but the prevailing scale of dwellings is very much so, as tear-down and replacement result in change that is badly inconsistent with the context, both physically and socially. A possibility for protection against that could be the establishment of powerful controls over both the demolition of existing dwellings and the reconstruction of their sites, applicable Town-wide but of special utility in these areas.
- (c) The character of Lexington is powerfully influenced by the character of its roads, some of which retain a traditional canopy of trees and bordering stone walls. The Scenic Roads Act (MGL Chapter 40 Section 15C) authorizes towns to designate roads it selects as "scenic," following which destruction of stone walls and trees requires Planning Board review and approval, including compensatory replacements. Explore whether that or some alternative means would be appropriate for protecting such roads in Lexington.
- (d) Undertake a process to identify places in Lexington that importantly contribute to the Town's character, attractiveness, or scenic interests, then devise means of protecting their contributions, whether through acquisition of easements,



requirements or incentives for sensitive siting of potentially intrusive development, commemorative plaques, or other means.

5.3 Develop regulations applying Town-wide to protect cultural resources.

- (a) Address out-of-scale houses. The continuing loss of existing homes and their replacement with far larger ones has been destructive of community character and housing resources. It has engendered a great deal of discussion and debate about what, if anything, the Town should do about it. That issue should be brought to resolution, whether through the adoption of carefully designed controls or through clear resolution that regulation is not an appropriate avenue. That effort is well under way, including “House Impact Provisions” currently being considered.
- (b) Strengthen Zoning’s present incentives for preservation. Lexington zoning has a unique set of incentives for the preservation of existing structures (Section 4.4). That promising initiative deserves review and, if possible, strengthening to be a more commonly effective tool.
- (c) Explore adoption of local protection for archeological resources. There are federal and state controls that often protect archeological resources, but in many instances neither of those apply. This is a complex area for local control, but there are some promising models that deserve being considered.
- (d) Strengthen & refine demolition controls. Lexington has a local bylaw requiring a delay before demolishing any building that the Historical Commission deems important to preserve (except within historic districts, where the Historic District Commission plays that role). Experience has indicated some aspects of that bylaw are in need of refinement. That bylaw is a highly useful one, and its refinement should be a priority undertaking.

5.4 Explore how to fund achievement of preservation objectives. For example, through adoption of a Local Option Property Tax Assessment system, as authorized by MGL Chapter 59 Section 5J, the Town can delay the full tax impact of increased historic building value resulting from historically compatible restoration efforts. Bedford is one of the towns that has done this. The cost to the Town would be minor, but such tax impact relief, though temporary, has proven to be a useful tool in preservation efforts elsewhere, especially when joined with State and federal historic preservation tax credit devices. Use of Tax Increment Financing, where improvements are financed through dedication of a portion of the increase in tax revenues that will result, is another example, this one authorized under MGL Chapter 40, Section 59. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is another.

